

REMARKS

Claims 2-19 are pending in this application.

By this Amendment, claims 2 and 9 are amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 1, and claim 1 is correspondingly canceled.

Claims 7, 8, 11 and 17 are amended to change their dependencies from canceled claim 1 to pending claim 2. Claims 2-11 and 17 are amended for clarity. Thus, no new matter is added by this Amendment.

I. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicant thanks the Examiner for the indication that claims 2-6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18 and 19 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

To this end, Applicant herein amends each of claims 2 and 9 to incorporate the subject matter of their respective base claims. Specifically, claim 2 is herein amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 1, and claim 9 is amended to also incorporate the subject matter of claim 1.

Accordingly, as acknowledged by the Patent Office, claims 2 and 9, as well as the claims dependent therefrom, are in condition for allowance.

II. Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §102(e)

Claims 1, 7, 8, 11, 14 and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,887,631 (Kiguchi). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 is herein canceled, and claims 7, 8, 11, 14 and 17 all depend from allowable claim 2. Accordingly, these claims are allowable for the same reasons as claim 2, as discussed above. Withdrawal of the rejection is thus respectfully requested.

III. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of the pending claims are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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